

6.0 CONCLUSION

Mercury contamination is a serious public health concern. The seriousness of this problem is reflected in the commitment of the Governors of the New England States and the Premiers of Eastern Canadian Provinces to adopt an aggressive *Regional Mercury Action Plan*. The *Regional Mercury Action Plan* calls for the establishment of a Regional Mercury Task Force and contains a number of major recommendations for reducing mercury. This task force will be looking, on a regional basis, at many of the same issues that this strategy encompasses. Working aggressively and cooperatively on a regional basis will substantially reduce mercury emissions from in-region sources.

Through implementation of this strategy and participation in the Regional Mercury Task Force, New Hampshire intends to aggressively pursue reductions in its own mercury emissions while at the same time pursuing similar emission reduction efforts for upwind sources. Just as New Hampshire took steps to reduce its own acid rain and nitrogen oxide emissions in advance of federal requirements, and demonstrated leadership in adopting progressive requirements for toxics in packaging and in batteries, paint and fluorescent lamp recycling, the State must again demonstrate leadership to encourage the federal and other state governments to reduce their mercury emissions. Because mercury can remain in the atmosphere for very long periods, emission contributions from distant upwind emission sources are important to address. By taking initiative in reducing its own mercury emissions, New Hampshire can insist on similar reductions of mercury from upwind regions in order to achieve progress in solving the public health and ecological threat of mercury contamination in our environment.

In many instances, source reduction (rather than expensive control technology) may prove to be the more cost-effective way to reduce man-made mercury contamination. Pollution prevention options eliminate mercury at the source rather than simply controlling it, providing a more permanent solution to mercury contamination. The actions contained in this strategy are expected to result in at least a 50% reduction in New Hampshire's mercury emissions over the next five years. Beyond that, New Hampshire will continue to strive for the virtual elimination of all harmful anthropogenic mercury releases to our environment.